

Environmental Assessment

Environmental Assessment (EA) Number: OR-056-02-038

Title: Pacificorp

Serial Number: OR 33383

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Office: Prineville

Resource Area: Deschutes

Type of Use: Electrical Distribution Right-of-Way

Project Location: Approximately 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ miles northwest from the town of Terrebonne, Oregon in T. 14 S., R. 13 E., Section 18, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, and T. 14 S., R. 12 E., Section 13, N $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$, Willamette Meridian, Oregon

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1.0 Proposed Action and Purpose and Need

1.1 Proposed Action

The proposed action is the granting of an electrical distribution line right-of-way (ROW) across Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed public lands to PacifiCorp to allow for utility service to private properties. The BLM managed public lands are located in Township (T.) 14 S., Range (R.) 13 E., Section 18; N $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$ NE $\frac{1}{4}$, N $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$ NW $\frac{1}{4}$, and T. 14 S., R. 12 E., Section 13; N $\frac{1}{2}$ N $\frac{1}{2}$, of the Willamette Meridian, Oregon (see map 1).

1.2 Purpose and Need

1.2.1 Need

The need for the proposed action is to provide reliable electrical services to customers in the Lower Bridge area. The BLM has a need to comply with the BLM's policy to manage right-of-way use of the public land through a system of designated ROW corridors. The Prineville District, Deschutes Resource Area has a need to comply with the Brothers/La Pine Resource Management Plan (RMP) Record of Decision (ROD) regarding the granting of a ROW (Brothers/La Pine ROD, 1989, pg. 29, 33 & 34):

"...actions approved will be consistent with the objectives of the RMP (pg 29)."

"Each right-of-way shall be limited to the area necessary for operation and maintenance, will consider the protection of public safety and will do no unnecessary damage to the environment (pg 33)."

"Each right-of-way shall contain terms and conditions requiring compliance with environmental quality standards applicable to Federal or State law (pg 33)."

1.2.2 Purpose

The purpose is to provide an electrical distribution line across BLM managed public lands to PacifiCorp, allowing utility service to private properties. To comply with the Brothers/La Pine RMP, the proposed action will incorporate the following objectives:

- Reduce disturbance to soils and vegetation on BLM managed land and limit the potential for the invasion of noxious weeds.
- Maintain or increase public safety on BLM managed public lands.
- Use existing ROW corridors where possible.
- Limit impacts to and conflicts with existing permitted uses of the BLM managed public land.

1.2.3 **Issues**

1.2.3.1 **Forestry**

The proposed action would affect juniper trees by decreasing the number of trees within the area. Construction of the power line would reduce the number of juniper trees in the ROW.

1.2.3.2 **Visual Resources**

The proposed action would increase the number of power poles and aerial lines in the area.

1.2.3.3 **Public Safety**

Increased power lines and poles in the area could result in greater public safety concerns. Public safety concerns could mean increased vandalism on the power poles.

1.2.3.4 **Recreation**

Construction activity involved in the placement of the poles and anchors could pose a hazard to recreationists.

1.2.4 **Background**

Pacificorp's Proposal:

Pacificorp is requesting to install approximately 8,700 feet of new 12.5 KV three phase aerial electrical distribution line. This line will consist of 28 power poles installed within the Deschutes County Road ROW. There will also be 15 anchors attached to this proposal with down guys and #2 AAAC Conductor outside (20 feet) of the Deschutes County ROW.

1.2.5 **Conformance and Consistency**

1.2.5.1 **Rights-of-Way** (BLM Manual 2800.06(B))

BLM Manual 2800.06 (B) states that it is the policy of the BLM to: *"Manage right-of-way use of the public land through a system of designated right-of-way corridors. The use of right-of-way corridors will be actively encouraged by the Bureau managers whenever practical and feasible."*

1.2.5.2 **Brothers/La Pine RMP/ROD**

"Brothers/La Pine Resource Management Plan Record of Decision and Rangeland Program Summary (Prineville District, July 1989): The Brothers/La Pine Resource Management Plan Record of Decision, which is the land use plan that covers the BLM managed lands in the area where the ROWs are being applied for provides the following management direction for Rights-of-Way and Utility and Transportation Corridors (pg. 29 and pgs. 33 & 34):

"...actions approved will be consistent with the objectives of the RMP."

“Each right-of-way shall be limited to the area necessary for operation and maintenance, will consider the protection of public safety and will do no unnecessary damage to the environment.”

“Public lands will continue to be available for rights-of-way, including multiple use and single use utility/transportation corridors following existing routes, communication sites and roads.”

“All right-of-way applications will be reviewed using the criteria of following existing corridors wherever practical and avoiding proliferation of separate rights-of-way....All designated areas of critical environmental concern and wilderness study areas will be considered right-of-way exclusion areas. Federally designated wild and scenic rivers, as well as rivers identified as eligible as potential wild and scenic rivers, will also be considered exclusion areas. All areas identified as having special status plant or animal species will be avoidance areas. Areas having high or sensitive visual qualities will be avoided or appropriate mitigation measures taken.”

1.2.5.3.Existing Right-of-Way Grant

Deschutes County has an existing road right-of-way for Lower Bridge Road through BLM managed public lands. Deschutes County has given their concurrence with the proposal to install 28 power poles and anchors within their existing right-of-way grant.

2.0 Description of the Alternatives

2.1 Alternative A: No Action

Under the No Action Alternative a new electrical distribution line ROW would not be granted.

2.2 Alternative B: Proposed Action

The proposed action is the granting of an electrical distribution line ROW across BLM managed public lands to PacifiCorp to allow for utility service to private properties. PacifiCorp is requesting to install approximately 8,700 feet of new 12.5 KV three phase aerial electrical distribution line. This line will consist of 28 power poles installed within the Deschutes County Road ROW and 15 anchors with down guys and #2 AAAC Conductor outside the ROW.

This alternative would comply with BLM’s policy to manage ROW use of the public land through a system of designated ROW corridors. This alternative would also comply with the objectives stated in 1.2.2 of this document in that it would: reduce disturbance to soils and vegetation on BLM managed land and limit the potential for the invasion of noxious weeds, maintain or increase public safety on BLM managed public lands, and to use existing ROW corridors where

possible.

3.0 Affected Environment, Including Existing Permits

3.1 Location and Topography

The area analyzed in this document begins 1¾ miles from the intersection of Highway 97 and Lower Bridge Road and continues west on Lower Bridge Road 1¾ miles through BLM managed public land.

The topography is relatively flat. The elevation ranges from 2,710 to 2,760 within the 1¾ miles of the project area. Volcanic ridges and rocky outcrops are common.

3.2 Vegetation

The native vegetation is typical of western juniper woodlands. Common native plants, besides juniper, include big sagebrush, and bitterbrush with an understory of shrubs, grasses and forbs. Bluebunch wheatgrass, Idaho fescue and buckwheat are common to the area.

3.3 Special Status Plants

The likelihood of occurrence of special status plants is low.

3.4 Noxious Weeds

Currently there are only a few, scattered noxious weed sites in the general area. Primary species are spotted knapweed, diffuse knapweed, and an occasional dalmatian toadflax. Other weedy species, which are not classified as noxious, include annual mustards, cheatgrass, mullein, and teasel.

The area surrounding the proposed project is periodically monitored for existence of noxious weeds and where infestations are found and treatment is warranted, control activities are initiated by BLM. These monitoring and treatment activities would continue on BLM managed public lands regardless of the development of these ROWs.

3.5 Recreation

This tract of BLM managed public lands has an “open” designation for OHV travel. This open designation allows OHV use both on and off roads throughout the BLM managed public lands. Within this 1¾ miles of BLM managed public lands there are 26 user created roads, none of which are “designated routes” under the current Brothers La Pine Management Plan. There is only one pole support placement that is in close proximity to one of these user created roads, however, placement of the pole support would not prohibit activity on this road. There is, however, recreational traffic throughout the project area by motorized vehicles, off-highway vehicles (ATVs, quads, dirt bikes, etc) and non motorized users (horse and pedestrian traffic, and mountain bikes).

3.6 **Visual Resources**

As identified in the Brothers/La Pine RMP, the project area's western ½ mile is designated as having high or sensitive visual qualities, whereas the rest of the project area is not in a high or sensitive visual area. The project area is 2 miles from the designated Wild & Scenic River Corridor of the Middle Deschutes River. The existing paved county roadway (granted to Deschutes County) and aerial transmission lines (granted to Bonneville Power Administration and Portland General Electric) cannot be seen from the river canyon. Recreational users on BLM managed public lands in the vicinity can see the power poles and aerial lines above the average height of the surrounding western juniper.

3.7 **Public Safety**

Current management problems in this project area include existence of multiple user created roads and illegal activities such as dumping, itinerant camping, abandoned cars, late night parties and bonfires, poaching, and unsafe target practice.

3.8 **Livestock Grazing**

This proposal is located within the 6,065 acre McWeiss Allotment. This allotment has been inactive since 1987.

3.9 **Wildlife Special Status**

Based on a visual survey conducted on March 18, 2002 and a literature search, no Special Status Species are documented in this area. No other wildlife concerns exist for this project.

3.10 **Cultural Resources**

It has been determined that this proposal has no effect, therefore cultural resources have been waived.

4.0 **Environmental Consequences**

4.1 **Vegetation**

4.1.1 **Alternative A: No Action**

Direct and Indirect: Existing recreational uses including off-road vehicle use would continue to impact vegetation.

4.1.2 **Alternative B: Proposed Action**

Direct and Indirect: Installation of the power poles and anchors would impact vegetation. The proposal includes cutting or topping 21 juniper trees. Trees that would be removed would be limbed and topped to 4 inches with stumps no higher than 12 inches. Any left over debris from the cutting or topping of the juniper trees would be chipped and scattered.

4.1.3 **Special Status Plants**

There is no expected impact on any Special Status Plants because of the low likelihood of the occurrence of Special Status Plants (Special Status Plant Survey Waiver, dated March 11, 2002, available at the Prineville District Office).

4.1.4 **Cumulative Impacts**

Removal of juniper trees would increase the availability of groundwater for native plant use and storage.

4.2 **Recreation**

4.2.1 **Alternative A: No Action**

Direct and Indirect: Increased illegal dumping and vandalism would occur.

4.2.2 **Alternative B: Proposed Action**

Direct and Indirect: The construction activity involved with placement of both the poles and anchors could pose a hazard to recreationists.

4.2.3 **Cumulative**

The installation of power poles, aerial distribution lines and anchors would increase the infrastructure on BLM managed public lands.

4.3 **Public Safety**

4.3.1 **Alternative A: No Action**

Direct and Indirect: Public safety and law enforcement concerns in the area would remain the same.

4.3.2 **Alternative B: Proposed Action**

Direct and Indirect: The construction activity involved with placement of both the poles and anchors could pose a hazard to motorists traveling on Lower Bridge Road.

5.0 **No Impacts**

The following critical elements were considered, but will not be addressed because they would either not be affected or do not exist in the project area:

1. Agricultural Lands, Prime or Unique
2. Flood plains
3. Riparian/Wetlands
4. Wild and Scenic Rivers
5. Wilderness
6. Wildlife
7. Cultural Resources
8. Environmental Justice
9. Air Quality

6.0 **Preparers and People, Agencies, and Organizations Consulted**

6.1 **Preparers (BLM)**

Name	Contributions	Title
Ron Halvorson	Botany	Botanist
Ron Gregory	Cultural Resources	Archaeologist
Peter Hall	Forestry Practices	Forestry Technician
Lisa Clark	Wildlife	Wildlife Technician

Robin Snyder	Recreation & Visual Resources	Outdoor Recreation Planner
Janet Hutchison	Realty, Team Leader	Realty Specialist
JC Hanf	Planning and Coordination	Natural Resource Staff Lead
Robert Towne	Coordination	Deschutes RA Field Mgr

6.2 Persons, Agencies, and Organizations Consulted

1. George Kolb, Deschutes County Public Works
2. Mike Bower, Pacificorp
3. Paul Dailey, Pacificorp

NEPA Requirements met:

/s/ JC Hanf, Acting
 Marci Todd
 Deschutes Resource Area Environmental Coordinator

04/29/2002
 Date

Attachment

Map 1: Map of Area

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

